

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1054

LIMDIS

FOR ASST SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR THEBERGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PORG, NU

SUBJECT: OAS SEC GEN ORFILA'S CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICY AND POLICY-
MAKERS

REF: MANAGUA 1007

1. AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, ALL THREE NICARAGUAN DAILIES ON FEBRUARY 26 GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO OAS SEC GEN ORFILA'S INTERVIEW WITH MEXICO'S EXCELSIOR WHICH CONDEMNED U.S. LATIN POLICY AND POLICY-MAKERS.

2. ORFILA WAS QUOTED AS TELLING THE UNITED STATES TO "GET RID OF ITS GREAT POWER INTERESTS IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT AN UNDERSTANDING AND HARMONY WITH THE REST OF THE CONTINENT". HE WARNED WASHINGTON THAT LATIN AMERICA WILL NOT "TOLERATE ACTS OF TUTELAGE OR DISCRIMINATION IN FORM OR SUBSTANCE". HE CALLED THE U.S. TRADE LAW "AN
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ECHO OF THE POLICY OF THE BIG STICK". HE CRITICIZED THE U.S.

DECISION TO REDUCE ITS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR OAS PROGRAMS OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY.

3. MOST IMPORTANT, FROM THE NICARAGUAN VIEWPOINT, ORFILA RAISED THE SPECTRE OF U.S. INTERVENTION WHEN HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT LATIN AMERICA WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE REGION KNOWN BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT WHEN IT WAS POSSIBLE TO "SEND AMERICAN TROOPS TO NICARAGUA IN 1912, OR THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN 1975". HE WENT ON TO CRITICIZE U.S. POLICY MAKERS (THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESIGN OF U.S. POLICY") FOR THEIR MISUNDERSTANDING OF LATIN AMERICA WHICH WAS EVIDENT IN THE U.S. FOREIGN TRADE LAW, AND "THE DELAY IN FINDING A POSITIVE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE PANAMA CANAL".

4. FINALLY, ORFILA DECLARED THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE SUCH CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICY AND POLICYMAKERS BECAUSE "I BELIEVE IN INDEPENDENT ATTITUDES. AS A RESULT OF THIS INDEPENDENCE, I FEEL FREE TO APPLAUD OR LAMENT THE POLICY OF ANY COUNTRY".

5. COMMENT: THE ORFILA INTERVIEW, WHETHER COMPLETELY ACCURATE OR NOT, WAS A DEPLORABLE AND INSENSITIVE ACT. THE PUBLICATION OF THE INTERVIEW IMMEDIATELY AFTER SECRETARY KISSINGER'S RETURN FROM A TRIP AIMED AT CREATING GOODWILL AND CLOSER BONDS WITH THE LATINS WAS ESPECIALLY UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE IT CANNOT FAIL TO GENERATE CONCERN, AND INCREASED ANTAGONISM IN CERTAIN CIRCLES, ABOUT OUR LATIN AMERICAN POLICY.

6. THE TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE EXCELSIOR INTERVIEW CONVEYED THE MESSAGE THAT ORFILA WAS CONDEMNING U.S. POLICY AND POLICYMAKERS FOR INSENSITIVITY TO LATIN ASPIRATIONS AND INTERESTS, AND FOR PATERNALISM AND DISCRIMINATION. IT GAVE A DISTORTED IMPRESSION OF THE MODERATE, CONCILIATORY POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AS EXPRESSED BY THE SECRETARY ON HIS RECENT TRIP.

7. IN VIEW OF EXCELSIOR'S KNOWN CARPING, NATIONALIST ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES, IT IS LIKELY THAT ORFILA'S REMARKS WERE NOT ACCURATELY REPORTED IN TONE AND SUBSTANCE. THAT, HOWEVER, IS BESIDE THE POINT. ORFILA KNOWS PERFECTLY WELL THE RISKS HE RUNS WHEN GRANTING AN INTERVIEW TO EXCELSIOR. HE ALSO KNOWS THAT HE IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE OAS TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE POLICIES OF MEMBER STATES. HE MUST BE AWARE THAT BY DOING SO HE IS VIOLATING THE PRINCIPLE OF POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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NEUTRALITY OF OFFICIALS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

8. ORFILA HAS NO HEAVENLY MANDATE TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF LATIN AMERICA OR TO MAKE POLITICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS WHICH AFFECT THE CLIMATE OF SUCH SENSITIVE BILATERAL ISSUES AS THE PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS. HIS NOTION THAT HE IS A FREE, INDEPENDENT SPIRIT, A VIEWPOINT THAT HE HAS EXPRESSED ON OTHER OCCASIONS, IS A FALSE ONE.

9. THE EXCELSIOR INTERVIEW MAY HAVE BEEN HELPFUL TO ORFILA'S IMAGE IN CERTAIN OAS CIRCLES AND IN ARGENTINA WHERE A PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST LOOMS, BUT IT DECIDEDLY WAS NOT HELPFUL TO OUR INTERESTS, OR THE INTERESTS OF INTER-AMERICAN COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY WHICH THE OAS IS SUPPOSED TO BE FOSTERING. WHATEVER ORFILA'S MOTIVATIONS, HIS DECLARATION, WHICH WAS TRANSMITTED OVER THE LATIN WIRE SERVICES, HAS TAKEN THE EDGE OFF THE GOODWILL GENERATED BY THE SECRETARY'S RECENT TRIP BY GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT U.S. POLICY WAS ONE OF PRESSURES AND THREATS.

10. UNLESS ORFILA IS TOLD THAT PUBLIC POLITICAL DECLARATIONS BY INTERNATIONAL OFFICIALS IS UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT, WHETHER DIRECTED AGAINST THE UNITED STATES OR OTHERS, I'M AFRAID THAT HIS AMBITION WILL GET THE BETTER OF HIS GENERALLY GOOD JUDGMENT.
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